ANNEX III

Young Entrepreneurs for the Alps: Empowering the Next Generation of Alpine Talents

Mission note

Decision paper

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Lombardy Region's EUSALP Mission, *Young Entrepreneurs for the Alps*, seeks to make the Alpine area more attractive for young people and young entrepreneurs by addressing depopulation, ageing, skills loss and the limited availability of services, education and suitable employment opportunities. Led by Lombardy Region, the Mission will combine research, regional policy mapping, data collection and structured dialogue with young people to identify barriers to entrepreneurship, enabling conditions and transferable success factors. The EUSALP Youth Council, partner Regions, Action Groups and scientific experts will contribute through consultations, workshops and Future Lab–inspired activities, ensuring an evidence-based and participatory approach. The Mission aims to define a common policy reference framework for youth entrepreneurship in the Alpine region. This framework will help Regions to assess what works, to update or reorient public strategies where needed, and to learn from transferable territorial experiences. At the same time, it will support the identification of shared challenges across Alpine regions, making it possible to present a common position to the European Commission and seek stronger recognition of mountain areas' specific needs in future EU policies and funding instruments.

MISSION

The Alpine region is currently facing a wide range of demographic, economic and territorial challenges, including depopulation, ageing trends, and the loss of qualified human capital. These dynamics weaken local economic ecosystems, reduce the development potential and competitiveness of mountain areas, and make youth retention increasingly difficult.

For young people, this often results in a lower attractiveness of Alpine territories and a stronger tendency to move towards more urbanized areas, where they can find better access to services, educational paths and job opportunities aligned with their skills and aspirations.

The main consequence of this situation is that it may further increase territorial fragility and limit the emergence of new entrepreneurial projects, creating a vicious cycle that risks putting Alpine territories in a disadvantaged position compared with other areas and regions.

Starting from this context, and in view of the broader objective of supporting youth entrepreneurship in the Alpine region, **Lombardy Region's Mission aims to contribute to the creation of an "Attractive Alpine economic area" for young people and young entrepreneurs**.

The strategic objective is to identify and promote the political, technical, and administrative conditions that can make Alpine territories more favourable to youth entrepreneurship. In this perspective, the Mission seeks to encourage young people to remain, live, work, invest and develop entrepreneurial projects in mountain areas. Youth entrepreneurship is therefore considered not only as an economic objective, but also as a lever to strengthen territorial attractiveness, retain qualified human capital and support the long-term resilience of Alpine areas.

To achieve this objective, the Mission will start with a better analysis of the current situation, through **research, data collection and direct dialogue with young people**.

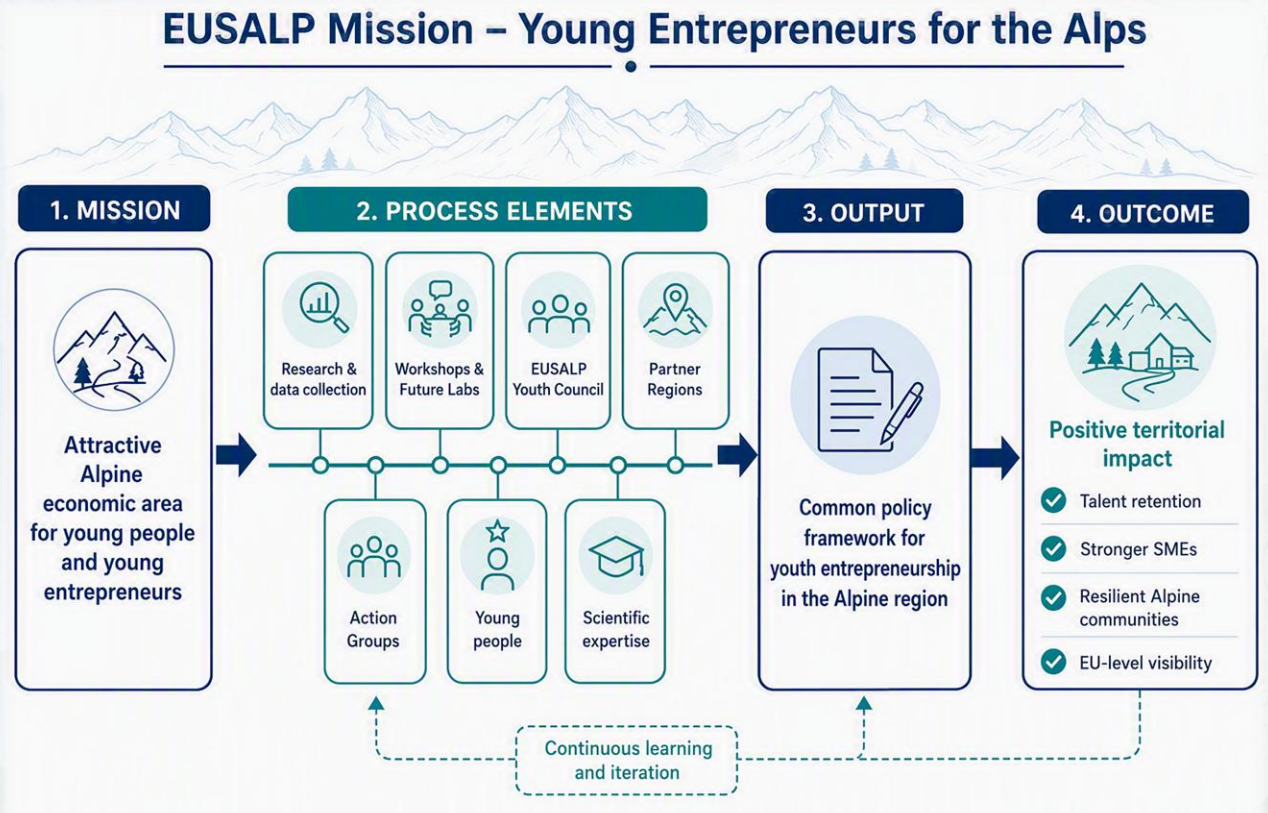
From a technical perspective, the Mission will adopt a targeted approach. This will help identify the main barriers perceived by young people as obstacles to entrepreneurship in Alpine areas, as well as the enabling conditions that could support the creation and sustainability of entrepreneurial initiatives in mountain territories. **The activities will focus on mapping existing regional measures and policy tools, collecting relevant scientific and operational experiences, and identifying success and failure factors that may support the definition of common policy proposals for youth entrepreneurship in the Alpine region.** This approach is coherent with the Mission's planned activity streams, which include the identification of current conditions perceived by young people as deterrents, the analysis of existing tools and enabling conditions, and the collection of scientific and operational experiences already developed in the Alpine macroregional context.

Young people will be involved through structured dialogue, consultations, workshops and laboratories inspired by the Future Lab Method. The EUSALP Youth Council, partner Regions, Action Groups and a scientific partner will also be involved in the

process. The Action Groups and Youth Council will contribute with technical input, data and expertise, according to their competences, supporting the Mission in the identification of barriers, existing measures and possible policy solutions. Lombardy Region will lead the Mission and provide the necessary financial resources. The Mission will be supported by external technical and scientific expertise to ensure an evidence-based approach. Other partner Regions will also be involved, and regular exchanges with EUSALP governance bodies will help share progress and results.

The expected final output will be the definition of a framework that will address the issues and challenges that have emerged from the research and will seek to describe how the Alpine regions might tackle them, thereby helping to enhance the region's appeal to young people keen to set up businesses. The document is intended to serve both as a technical basis for the regions to define or amend their policies, and as a shared vision of the needs of the Eusalp territory, which could be brought to the attention of the European Commission. The document will be presented by the Mission Rapporteur, Regional Minister Guido Guidesi, at the EUSALP General Assembly at the end of 2027. The results of the Mission may also provide the basis for a possible pilot project in 2028.

The Mission has a clear European dimension and strong political relevance. It can help make the Alpine region more attractive for young people, more competitive for businesses and more visible at EU level. It can also help bring the specific needs of mountain areas to the attention of European institutions.



The added value of the Mission lies in its capacity to bring together young people, Regions and policymakers through dialogue, around the common goal of creating better conditions to live, work, invest and start a business in Alpine areas. The Mission will also build on the knowledge and experience already developed within EUSALP, including the contribution of the Action Groups, in order to turn local needs and practical evidence into shared political proposals. In this way, youth entrepreneurship becomes a tool to support the future of Alpine communities and strengthen their resilience and attractiveness.

The Mission supports a more competitive, innovative and sustainable Alpine economy. It helps strengthen local businesses, industries and SMEs, while also contributing to the development of human capital, skills and employment opportunities.

From a governance point of view, the Mission is aligned with the 2025 Presidency legacy of Austria and Liechtenstein on innovation and territorial dimension, as well as with the priorities of the 2026 Bavarian Presidency, especially on innovation, research and the strengthening of EUSALP. It also takes into account the document “EUSALP 2028+ together for a strong future of the Alpine Region”, particularly with regard to the embedding of EUSALP priorities in European policies. The Mission is also complementary to the “European Mountain Pact” proposed by Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Region. This is particularly relevant for the recognition of mountain areas as strategic for Europe, the need for stronger EU financial support for interregional, cross-border and transnational projects, and the importance of a results-oriented approach. The Mission can also contribute to the discussion on how to better include EUSALP priorities in European policies and funding instruments, including through better coordination of Interreg funds.